

to lose their health care coverage. Because AHPs are exempted from state insurance laws, AHPs can "cherry pick" the healthiest employees and deny coverage to those who are more costly to cover. This would drive up insurance premiums for everyone who remains in state-regulated insurance plans, making health insurance less affordable and forcing people to drop their insurance because of rising costs. I recognize the frustration and struggles faced by the self-employed and small business owners trying to provide health care to their employees, but AHPs are not the answer to the uninsurance crisis, if they will result in more people becoming uninsured.

Similarly, the House will consider a medical malpractice bill that will fail to lower health care costs for Americans. Proponents of this bill claim that rising costs of medical malpractice insurance and "excessive litigation" are driving up health care costs so much that caps must be instituted, placed on the amount of money a victim of malpractice can receive for a lifetime of pain and suffering or other non-economic damage.

Unfortunately, these caps will have little effect except to limit patient rights to sue for medical injury. Numerous studies have shown that medical malpractice awards, legal fees, and other costs account for less than one percent of the nation's health care spending. This bill represents nothing more than a false promise.

Soaring malpractice insurance rates need to be addressed with two principles in mind. First, do no harm to the victims of medical errors. Second, start addressing insurance abuses by focusing on the malpractice insurance industry, not the victims of medical malpractice. Narrow federal caps on non-economic damages are not the way to address the problems with malpractice insurance.

Health care costs are rising for many reasons. Given the relatively small role that medical malpractice verdicts and settlements play in rising health care costs, this bill is really more of a distraction that is keeping us from making headway on the real culprits. Congress should leave regulation of insurance and tort law to the states. Congress should not spend its time demonizing victims and their advocates.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of underlying issues that come up when considering America's health care crisis: uninsurance, underinsurance, affordability, and quality, just to name a few. All Americans deserve quality, comprehensive, and affordable health care, and I look forward to the day when we will consider legislation that truly responds to these challenges.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS WITH RESPECT TO COMMEMORATION OF WOMEN SUFFRAGISTS

SPEECH OF

HON. DEBORAH PRYCE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 25, 2005

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate women suffragists. As one of the eighty-three women serving in the House and Senate, the Women's Rights Movement was, and continues to be, in my opinion, one of the most inspirational series of events to occur in United States history.

The battle for suffrage, fought by the early women's rights leaders was thought to be the most effective way to change an unjust system. Constant barriers were thrown ahead of them, and degrading stereotypes were placed upon them.

Challengers of women's suffrage claim that women were less intelligent and less able to make political decisions than men. The women of the suffrage movement dismissed these accusations with the ratification of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote. Now, women utilize this freedom more so than men. Among citizens, women's voting rates have surpassed men's ever since the 1984 presidential election. 54 percent of the 2004 presidential election votes belonged to women and 46 percent of the votes to men.

Women like Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Caddy, Sojourner Truth, and Susan B. Anthony were the pioneers of the suffrage movement. They took risks and broke laws in order to pave the way for the new generation of suffrage leaders like Carrie Chapman Catt, Maud Wood Park, Lucy Burns, Alice Paul, and Harriot E. Blatch. All of these women devoted their lives to this cause. That is why it is so important that we devote a day to honor these women.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO EX- EMPT HAWAII FROM THE AD- JUSTED GROSS INCOME LIMITA- TION ON PARTICIPATION IN CON- SERVATION PROGRAMS

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 27, 2005

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill that exempts my State of Hawaii from the adjusted gross income limitation on participation in Farm Bill conservation programs. These programs assist and incentivize producers and landowners to preserve and conserve the dwindling agricultural lands of our country.

These invaluable programs include the following:

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which provides annual rental payments to replace crops on highly erodible and environmentally sensitive lands with long-term plantings that protect the soil. Hawaii is attempting to access this program, the largest of all the conservation programs, by developing a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, which is awaiting approval by the USDA.

Conservation Security Program (CSP), which provides financial and technical assistance for improvements in conserving environmental resources on farmland that meets certain soil and water quality criteria standards.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which provides cost share payments to producers and landowners to plan and install structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible lands to alleviate conservation problems, with 60 percent of funds allocated to livestock producers.

Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP), which assists state and local governments to acquire easements to limit conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), which retires acres from grazing under arrangements ranging from 10-year agreements to permanent easements and permits the delegation of easements to certain private organizations and state agencies.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), which uses permanent and temporary easements and long-term agreements to protect farmed wetlands.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), which provides cost sharing and technical assistance for conservation practices that primarily benefit wildlife.

These programs have become increasingly important in Hawaii, where funding has risen from around \$4.9 million in 2003 to \$14.2 million in 2005. Unfortunately, especially in the case of the Conservation Reserve Program, Hawaii's ability to access these programs has been severely limited by the application of the adjusted gross income limitation (AGI) placed on the programs by the 2002 Farm Bill to Hawaii's unique conditions. As a result, many of the lands that would deliver the highest environmental benefits are excluded because of this provision.

In Hawaii's case, there are compelling reasons why an exemption from the AGI limitation is not only fair but necessary for these programs to achieve their desired goals. By way of background, during the writing of the 2002 Farm Bill some groups called attention to the fact that some very wealthy individuals were receiving payments under Farm Bill conservation programs. As a result, a limitation was put in place making individuals and corporations with annual incomes of \$2.5 million or more ineligible for participation in Farm Bill conservation programs unless 75 percent of that income comes from farming, ranching, or forestry.

This adjusted gross income (AGI) provision seriously disadvantages Hawaii because the major portion of our agricultural lands are owned by families or corporations with diversified holdings. In many cases, these entities have remained engaged in ranching or farming, despite low profit margins, due to a connection to long traditions in ranching, farming, or other activities.

Large agricultural landholdings in Hawaii typically date back more than 100 years and follow the traditional Hawaiian land division of ahupua'a, where land parcels extend from the mountain to the sea, based on the ancient Hawaiian recognition of the interconnectedness of these environments. As a result, we have properties where the upper lands might be used for ranching, the middle lands for crops or residential development, and the lower, oceanside lands for hotels and business developments. Therefore, we have ranches where income from ranching is supplemented by a shopping center and restaurant. A portion of the ranch land may, and in many cases in Hawaii does, harbor endangered plant and animal species. Taking these marginal lands out of cattle production and assisting with reforestation of native species can have a tremendous impact on the prospects of survival for Hawaii's endangered species. But regrettably, the AGI provision has meant that federal funds to assist in these efforts cannot be used to provide what could be enormous environmental benefits. Thus, as a result of our particular history, we in Hawaii are denied access